

The SUICIDE of Recognizing RED CHINA

Edward Hunter

THE MOST IMPORTANT political issue in Asia is that of the recognition of Communist China by the Western Powers and the United Nations. I never would have suspected this before visiting those Asian countries. Now, after seeing the use that has been made of recognition in those countries whose governments have granted it, and the effect of it on Asians everywhere, I feel that this issue can be called decisive, in its military sense, indicating a turning point.

This, of course, is not how it looks in the important capitals of the world. In America and Europe, it

doesn't seem to be such a vital issue at all. Outside of Asia, it looks like just another diplomatic tussle. What difference does it make if a long-winded Peiping delegate sits or doesn't sit in the United Nations? Don't all the delegates spend most of their time there talking anyway?

But in Asia, far from being a mere diplomatic debate, the recognition issue is a naked contest for power. In China and its divorced anti-Communist appendage of Formosa, and in Singapore and Malaya, as well as Japan, Indonesia, Burma, Thailand, and the Philippines, this recognition issue is a matter of deeds, not words. It decides whether a man must conform his day-to-day life to the theory that Communism is here to stay, that it will inevitably reach his neighborhood in the not too distant future, and that he better put

Edward Hunter, author of the recently published Brainwashing in Red China, is a regular contributor to THE MERCURY. From his Hong Kong base he has covered most of the Far East during the last years.

himself on record as being on the right side. In Asia, this question intimately and physically determines one's whole conduct. Every move made regarding it in the West is eagerly and nervously watched as a guide to action.

Obviously, people in faraway America and Europe cannot be expected to view it the same way. They cannot conceive, in their normal environments at home, that such an issue of protocol can decide how a simple citizen should arrange his social, political, and business life, even what newspapers he will read. In the East, this is exactly what it does. As the argument goes in the U.N., so goes the "people's resistance" in opposite ends of Asia, in Korea and Malaya, and to it is adjusted the daily life of Asians everywhere else.

WHAT has been happening in Asia is that recognition of Red China, starting out as a matter of protocol, quickly leads to a change in a people's whole relationship and attitude to the Communist movement. In Asia, Western governments such as Britain's, and Eastern nations such as India, must put their recognition into effect. And to do so has meant a bias in their actions that have made them allies of Communism, although they dislike it heartily, and enemies of the anti-Communist movement, although their own futures depend on its success.

This permeates into extraordinary spheres. The editor of a Chinese so-called third-force weekly was at first refused permission to buy space on the billboard of the ferry in Hong Kong "until you get the approval of the Chinese government."

"What Chinese government?" he asked. "Do you mean Formosa?"

"Oh no," he was told. "That isn't the Chinese government. Britain recognizes Peiping."

"How in the world do you expect an anti-Communist publication to get the approval of a Communist government," he pressed, and only after long and tedious negotiation was he allowed to advertise, and even then given the least conspicuous spot. Meanwhile, the two principal Communist newspapers in Hong Kong shared the back and front of the ferry station, where nobody could miss seeing what they have to say. These newspapers lead the chorus denouncing Hong Kong "on principle."

More sensational matters are involved, too. The first sight that greets the eye of the air passenger to Hong Kong is a long, long row of airplanes stretched down the length of Kai Tak airfield. They all have the red flag neatly painted on their tails. In order to leave or enter the airfield, everyone has to pass this procession. These are the planes that were bought with American money, and which the Nationalist government of China sold to Major General Claire

Chennault's airline to operate in a plain business deal. These are the seventy-two planes that the Hong Kong courts gravely decided belonged to "the government of China," conveniently handing down the long-delayed decision just a few days after London recognized Peiping. These are the planes, too, which if not kept by the British police on the airfield at Kai Tak, might have changed the war situation in Korea during those precarious early days. The least that can be said with certainty is that possession of such a nearby fleet of modern planes would have saved many, many American lives, and as it turned out, ultimately many British lives as well. The red flag flies high on a corner building overlooking the airfield, as a testimonial to this Communist victory.

RECOGNITION HAS GONE farther than this. Take Indonesia, for example. Indonesia is a new nation born of World War II, whose independence was granted so fast that it admittedly caught even its republican leaders by surprise. In their efforts to achieve internal security and lull insurgent groups into harmony, they followed what was first called a policy of neutrality, and then an independent policy. This entailed recognition of Peiping. The contradictions and loopholes this created have been the main strength of the fifth columns dedicated to the violent overthrow of the young re-

public. It even converted an underground Communist agent, with very limited scope, from a man who had been expelled from the country in handcuffs to an ambassador, in which position he was able to resume his subversive conspiracies on a scale he never before imagined. The effect this transfer of position had on the morale of the people of Indonesia can be easily imagined. What else could it mean to the simple farmer or worker than that the Reds are right when they warn they are coming back in power?

The major fifth column in Indonesia was, of course, the Chinese. Every Indonesian official to whom a foreign correspondent talks refers to this Chinese fifth column. Yet, seduced by the logic of Red recognition, these same Indonesian officials were giving the Chinese inhabitants no alternative but to join and support it.

A typical example was how Indonesia implemented the treaty under which Holland granted it sovereignty. This provided that persons of Chinese blood born in Indonesia had to decide by the end of 1950 whether they would be Indonesian or become Chinese nationals. This required a specific rejection of Indonesian citizenship. Everyone assumed that, naturally, the Chinese could opt for Peiping or for Formosa. Forms were printed on that assumption. But it wasn't to be. Somebody pointed out that Indo-

nesia recognized Peiping, and that to permit the Chinese to choose Formosa was "an unfriendly act toward the government of China." So the Chinese in Indonesia were allowed to choose only between being nationals of a China interpreted as Peiping, or to be stateless, if they decided to reject Indonesian nationality. Meanwhile, the Chinese-language press, overwhelmingly Red, stressed that Peiping would have nothing to do with those Chinese who remained Indonesian, subtly letting them know they would have no protection against discrimination.

Anyone who knows anything about the psychology of overseas Chinese, particularly in Asia where they constitute disliked minorities, depending for their safety on strong protection from China, knows that the one classification that would be sure to horrify them, and which they would surely refuse under any circumstances, would be that of "stateless." So the figures showed. Hardly any Chinese chose to be stateless. Those who, for racial or other ties, wished to be Chinese in nationality, had no alternative but to list themselves as Communist Chinese. What the Peiping regime had been unable to put across, the Indonesian government which it was pledged to overthrow did for it, bringing into the Communist orbit tens of thousands through so-called voluntary signature.

This put these overseas Chinese on the Nationalist blacklist, and made their participation in the subversive plots being hatched by the Chinese Communist Embassy almost wholly unavoidable. This obligatory membership in a Communist regime, imposed on these Chinese in Indonesia by a susceptible Jakarta government, was as eloquent a warning to them as could be given that they had better implement their new allegiance by deeds; in other words, join the fifth column.

Indonesia has given numerous examples of how the logic of Red recognition is followed to suicidal extremes in Asia. After all, Indonesia is part of the U.N., and except for pressure of the United States through the U.N., it would still be under the Dutch flag. Yet recognition of Red China brought Jakarta to a policy which is, in effect, a repudiation of the U.N. stand on what group represents the Chinese people.

The anniversary of the establishment of a Communist regime in Peiping was celebrated formally in Indonesia, but not the Double Tenth, the traditional holiday marking the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty and the original establishment of a Chinese republic. This has been the traditional Chinese patriotic day. Strict police measures were brought to bear in Indonesia to suppress any such manifestation.

Pro-Nationalist Chinese newspapers in Jakarta, Surabaya, Semarang, and Medan merely printed the flag of the Chinese republic of Sun Yat-sen on their first pages that day. If freedom of expression had any meaning, this was the least that could be permitted to Chinese who wanted their true sentiments known. But no, the Indonesian police swooped down in each of these cities, and confiscated the entire edition.

That Red China, over its radio and in literature with which it was flooding Indonesia, was simultaneously categorizing the Jakarta government as reactionary and fascist and "an enemy of the people," broadly inviting the Indonesian people to rise up and overthrow it, and force Indonesia to join the satellite bloc, was apparently immaterial, compared with the fact of Red recognition. This was the usual way that recognition of Peiping blurred the basic sense of security of such governments in Asia.

THERE HAS BEEN no single political issue on which the Soviet Russians have been more persistent and uncompromising over so long a period than this one of Peiping's role in the U.N. This was the issue on which Moscow walked out of the U.N., boycotting all its sessions for months, until only brought back by spectacular examples of how well the world organization was working without it, culminating in the swift

dispatch of an international army to Korea to repel the invasion.

This recognition issue was one that Moscow and its stooges brought up at every Council or Assembly session, and in every possible U.N. Committee meeting, each time endlessly going round and round into every conceivable propaganda by-path. Observers in America and Europe thought the Comintern was merely using the U.N. as a convenient propaganda forum, getting the most out of it while the opportunity lasted. This, indeed, might have been the tactic used on the West, but it was no propaganda show for Asia.

The West should know by bitter experience that when the Communists keep hammering on any one point, it isn't for a mere propaganda reason, and it isn't because they have lost their perspective in a fit of pique, but because they know it is something vital to their power drive. So it has been with this recognition issue.

Malaya is a blood-stained example. I sat in a field tent in upper Malaya while a British officer was discussing a leaflet drop over Chinese villages in the north. Two million leaflets had been dropped, a major and costly propaganda operation.

The leaflets told the Chinese people that they need no longer be afraid of the guerrillas, that they did not have to supply them with information and food in fear of being

killed, that they were being given unflinching support against the "bandit terror." There would be no compromise, these Chinese villagers were told.

But the British officer and his Chinese interpreters looked dismayed. They were reading that day's Chinese-language newspaper. This was the newspaper that went into every village; it was anti-Communist. There was at least one person who could read in every village, and he would tell the others what the paper said. That day the main story was a statement by the British Foreign Minister in London. Naturally, this had to be given a big play. The statement was a denial that there was any change in London's policy toward Peiping, and went on to say that people should be realistic, for the Communist government was in control of the entire mainland, with no likelihood of being dislodged.

The only inference the Chinese villagers could get out of this was that Britain was telling them to pay no attention to what they were being told on the spot, but to play cricket with the Reds. The only way the villagers could interpret the article was that England was saying the same thing as Peiping. And Peiping was warning them to collaborate while they still had the chance. "This pulls the carpet out from under our feet on that leaflet drop," an interpreter remarked. "The Communists are only saying

what London is saying, that they're here to stay."

Obviously the Briggs plan for the pacification of Singapore and Malaya, ambitious as it was, couldn't succeed under such a handicap created by London, and sure enough, its failure was admitted when Churchill resumed power.

DURING MY TRAVELS in Singapore and Malaya, I was constantly taken aside by Chinese and Eurasians, when they learned I was an American. They would all ask me the same questions, no matter whether they were students, merchants, educators, workers, or government employees. Here was how it was usually phrased:

"The British are asking us to help resist the Communists. Then why do they recognize Peiping? After all, we have to stay here. We can't quit overnight the way the British did the last time."

If this sounded harsh, it was a matter of life and death that these people were discussing, and they couldn't mince words over it. In probably all cases, these people were in effect pro-British. They did not want the British to quit. All they wanted was to feel certain that London was not playing both sides, and would not leave them holding the bag.

This sort of policy might be diplomacy in the Western capitals, but on the scene of the shooting, it be-

came a form of psychological warfare in support of the enemy.

The Chinese had learned through the experience of a thousand years to read between the lines, to look behind a paragraph to see what influence was concealed there. If recognition of Communist China was based on being practical, how much truer did this hold for Asia itself than for America and Europe! The ordinary Chinese of any class living outside the mainland, would figure that the only sensible thing was to do likewise. He would make sure that his name was on no Communist blacklists; that his name was on the lists of those who contributed to the "liberation war defense funds" and paid their underground taxes. Better still, if he had a relative who could join the Communist underground, this would help establish the fact that he rendered physical as well as material help. This is the secret of how the Communists have been able to continue exacting contributions of money and supplies in Malaya. The Chinese don't want to be caught holding the bag, and double-talk won't convince them to do so.

This was no theory to these millions of Chinese and other non-British inhabitants of the Communist-menaced areas. This was a personal problem, that could not be talked away. You either did or you didn't. So you did. Even if you were anti-Communist, if you had a fam-

ily, or a business to safeguard, you did at least as much as the British government — you dealt with the Chinese Communists.

After Churchill took power, he sent Oliver Lyttelton, his new Colonial Secretary, to survey the situation on the spot. Leading Chinese organizations pleaded that recognition of Communist China be withdrawn, as the necessary corollary to obtaining the loyalty of the Chinese in Malaya. Although Lyttelton made historic concessions, silence on this fundamental point echoed loudly in Chinese ears. Red propaganda merely kept playing up the theme that the Communists would come "into your area, and then, if you have not helped us, you were better dead, you and all your relatives."

ON THE SPOT, in Asia, recognition by the U.N., or the United States, of Communist China would mean only one thing to these millions and millions of overseas Chinese and other Asians outside China. This was the same thing it would mean to the 450,000,000 inhabitants of China's mainland, and the millions in Formosa. This would be that the Western world, the proud and powerful Western Powers, had capitulated and agreed that Communism was the permanent form government in Asia would take. The Chinese have been used to seeing through artifices and verbiage for

generations. No matter how the diplomats phrased it, no matter how loftily they explained and interpreted, this is how it would look to the Chinese.

They know that Communism cannot remain static; it will conquer all of Asia, or be destroyed. Recognition by so august a body as the world organization would be admission that the first alternative was Asia's future. Maybe it would not be intended this way, but this is what it would mean to the Asian.

The Chinese, through their experience with proclamations and diplomacy, would read more than this in recognition. They know that the Communist expansion program is just as well understood in foreign capitals as in Asia. They would be unable to conceive of the Western diplomats taking so drastic a step without realizing its consequences.

Their interpretation is not far-fetched. Recognition might be pooh-poohed as a formality in America and Europe, but in Asia recognition was the starting point for every sort of pro-Communist bias and pressure. High government officials might flatter themselves that they could see through the Red maneuvers and that their recognition would be only a technicality, a paper recognition. But their subordinates have only the deed to go on, and the deed is recognition.

On the spot in Asia, too, where the local official has the job of ful-

filling his government's policy, what takes place is usually much more than might have been intended. These officials, the British and the Dutch and the Indians, Indonesians and Burmese, have found themselves in the difficult position of having to prove that they were right in recognizing Red China. This has led many of them to try to prove that Communism will never be overthrown, and that, anyway, it is basically different in Asia than in Soviet Russia. The subterfuges and maneuvers which this requires are fantastic in their desperate support of Peiping and their frantic opposition to Formosa, or any place else that threatens this pro-Peiping point of view.

AS SHOULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, the fullest advantage has been taken of this state of affairs by Communists and fellow-travelers. They have deliberately used recognition as a shield for subversive activities, both in facilitating whatever line Peiping wanted pressed, and putting obstacles in the way of those who did not want to submit.

Even non-Communist officials, and the great majority are definitely so, were put in the highly unpleasant position of having to prove their government was right, even if this meant supporting the Reds. These people on the spot often lost sight of the end in the morass of means, and became so

entangled in argument that they soon were doing everything in their power to support the Peiping regime, to prevent its overthrow. They would not be doing their duty by London if Peiping were proven not to be in secure control of the Chinese mainland. So, it had to be made secure, or if not secure, this had to be concealed from those who might have taken advantage of it.

Meanwhile the casualty lists rise, if not in Korea, in Malaya, if not in Malaya, in the Philippines, or Indo-China, or where you will. The Peiping government is not choosy.

This is why, in Hong Kong, the official radio operates only a few hours a day, and is not given sufficient power even to reach all of the crown colony, for fear some of the non-Communist — heaven forbid anti-Communist — broadcasts might be heard in Red China. This was why the USIS news programs were dropped, and the program in Cantonese put out by the USIS replaced with a British program in Mandarin, which is not understood by the people of Canton. This is why the Chinese-language bookshops in Hong Kong are crammed with viciously anti-American and anti-British literature, while refusing to handle anything not approved by the Communist authorities in Red China.

This was why an increased registration fee was proclaimed for all

publications in Hong Kong, with the result that only anti-Communist publications have been driven out of existence. The ostensible reason was the opposite, of course. The first newspaper to go out of existence, unable to raise the more than tripled fee, was the first daily to come out against Communism in Hong Kong after the fall of the mainland. This was a liberal, non-Kuomintang newspaper, at that. Another to go under was a weekly in the English language. Under such restrictions it first became a bi-weekly, then a monthly, and finally died.

The make-believe extended all along the line. Authorities in Malaya abstained from identifying the Chinese Communist guerrillas as either Communist or Chinese. They were referred to in a way that could not hurt anybody's feelings, except perhaps those of the guerrillas. They were called just bandits. To refer to them as Communists, particularly as Chinese Communists, would have been awkward for the London government, which was defending its judgment in recognizing Red China in the first place. The only rub to this was that the Chinese saw through it.

They were not fooled the least bit. Each time they read a communiqué mentioning just "bandits," it reminded them that the British government was so buffaloeed by Peiping that it did not dare to identify the

people who were ambushing and killing Englishmen.

In order to maintain the fiction that these insurgents were just "a local problem," and so as not to offend this "friendly neighbor," Red China, the British had to extend their make-believe even farther. They had to close their eyes to the persistent and calculated assistance that came from across the border to the insurgents in Malaya. When I was there, the guerrillas were comfortably located across the border in rubber estates in Thailand, where they rested up and trained between assignments.

This situation, in which the little white lie of recognition of Red China as a formality seems so innocent at first, builds up in this manner, until the jungle of evasions and distortions becomes impenetrable. Then, instead of facing the hard facts, a new plan is dramatically announced "to deal with the situation," new faces are brought in to give an appearance of a new approach, and the same circle is gone round once again.

THIS HAS BEEN Burma's plight. Ever since V-J Day and the subsequent granting of sovereignty by the British, that country has been plagued by Communist and semi-Communist insurrections, which have effectively prevented it from making even a start toward national rehabilitation and stability.

Yet, under the soothing influence of India, the Rangoon government did everything in its power to make believe that its Peiping neighbor was not interfering in Burmese affairs. Even while Peiping was distributing maps showing part of Burma as belonging to Communist China, this pretense was maintained, because to do anything else would be to jeopardize recognition.

Yet the example of India should have been sufficient warning. Under the guidance of Nehru, India insisted that good relations with Red China had to be assumed, and when the Tibetan problem arose, made the most in U.N. debates of how smoothly this question was being arranged, without any unpleasant language. To have said otherwise would have made a farce of recognition, and this could not be allowed. The Indian policy, which Nehru insisted should be the model for the U.N. in Korea, was perfect except for one drawback. When the verbal smoke cleared, Tibet was completely in Chinese Communist hands. This is the sort of negotiation and compromise which recognition of Red China imposes every time.

Burma, in order to defend its policy of recognition, has had to reserve its harsh words for the Nationalist Chinese in the north, who were fighting the same people as were determined to overthrow the Burmese government, in the same

way as they were sabotaging Indonesia.

THE ORIGINAL ARGUMENT used to defend recognition by such Western Powers as granted it was that this permitted diplomats in China to see what was going on within the country. They explained that their embassies and consulates constituted listening posts in an otherwise forbidden land. They could report on what was taking place in that enormous country, and at the same time keep the hand of friendship extended in readiness for the day when Mao would turn back on Stalin and clasp it. Only it never worked out this way, for the foreign representatives were not allowed to go anywhere except under escort, and anyone they talked to was put under investigation. This impossible state of affairs was admitted when the British government recently shut its Consulate General in Canton. Completely contradicting their previous premise, without so much as batting an eye, the dignified Whitehall spokesmen said there was no longer anything a Consulate General could do

in that enormous region of China. As the British press in Hong Kong said, a British diplomat "never had a more thankless or futile post."

British representation, however, was not a futile matter to Peiping. Never before had any nation been given such an opportunity to demonstrate to its people how it could twist the tail of the British lion with impunity, and keep on doing so, month in and month out. Never in diplomatic history has there been such an example of humiliation as was provided by London's retention of its Embassy in a nation that conspicuously ignored its existence. The propaganda value of this to the Peiping regime is incalculable. Peiping is thus able to demonstrate to its people how powerful they have become under Communism, so that even the proud British bow and scrape, saying please, allow me to recognize you.

That such tactics are tantamount to committing slow suicide is something these officials seem to leave for tomorrow — or perhaps other people — to handle. Today they are concerned primarily with how to save their government's face.
